

Frequently  
Asked  
Questions

of the

# NEW BRITAIN BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS

*New Britain*



*Tap is tops!*

# NEW BRITAIN WATER

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. My water usage this billing period seems to be higher than “normal”. What's wrong?
2. How is the amount of my water bill determined?
3. When is my water bill due?
4. Why couldn't the Meter Reader Read my Meter?
5. How do I read my meter?
6. Why did I Receive a Second Notice After I Paid My Bill?
7. Why do you have to get into my house to change the meter?
8. How many gallons are in a cubic foot of water?

### One more thing...

Very few people wake up in the morning and say: “**Today I’m going to waste some water.**” Most water wasters simply don’t know the rules. Another way to **reduce your bills is to save water!**

It's not just your toilet, showerheads, or faucets that waste water. It's you. Think about it. Have you ever let the water run to get a colder glass of water or flushed the toilet just to throw something away?

Be honest now. There's a lot of little things that together end up as this great big water wasting problem. Watch what you do and change your water wasting ways. To get started, [click here](#) for some ideas that might help.



## 1. My water usage this billing period seems to be higher than “normal”. What's wrong?

There are a series of questions you should ask yourself:

- Is this the first water bill you've received at this address?
- Did the use of the property change since your last water bill?
- Have you had any leaks or frozen pipes?
- Did you fill your children's pool in the hot weather?
- Are you or your tenants using washing machines or dishwashers?
- Did you install an irrigation system?
- Has your family increased in size?
- Have you recently needed to replace your water heater or boiler?

If you have a multi-family or commercial property, you might also ask yourself:

- Do you have new tenants?
- Did you have problem tenants?
- Do you have outside faucets that are being heavily used?
- Do you have water cooled air conditioning units?

If you determine there were no unusual high usage events such as filling a swimming pool, starting a new lawn, or having plumbing work done to repair a faulty fixture since your last billing, we suggest you do the following:

1. Check the accuracy of the reading. Your last meter reading is on your bill. Read your meter and make sure the number is higher than the reading on the bill. If the meter indicates a lower number, we may have misread the meter. If this is the case call the office and one of our technicians will come out and reread the meter after which the office will correct your bill.
2. Check the "leak detector" on the meter. The small triangular dial is the low flow indicator that moves when water is passing through the meter. If no water is being used inside or outside your home this dial should be still. If the dial is moving, which indicates water usage, do the following:
  - Check your toilet for leaks. The toilet uses approximately 30% of the water in your home and if it is leaking you may not hear it. Do this simple test. Put a couple of drops of food coloring in the tank of the toilet. If, after 15 minutes, the dye appears in the bowl, the toilet has a leak.
  - Also check your sinks, bathtubs and showers for leaks.
3. If you can't find any leaks, please call the office for further advice or assistance.



## 2. How is the amount of my water bill determined?

There are two parts to your water bill. The meter service charge is based on the size of the water meter located at your property. The usage charge is based on the amount of water used since your previous reading. The amount of water multiplied by the appropriate rate determines the amount of your usage charge. These two charges added together equal your total water bill.

For example: the bill for a household with a 5/8" meter billed semi-annually would be calculated thusly:

Rates for fiscal year 2007 (please note that out of town rates may vary):

For a 5/8" meter, the semi-annual service charge \$24.00

For the first 2,300,000 cubic feet of water, the rate is \$27.82 per 1,000 cubic feet

Usage is calculated by subtracting the previous reading from the current reading:

Meter reading this month 86100

Meter reading six months ago 83200

Water consumption 2900 cu ft

And the usage charge is:  $2.9 \times 27.82 = \$80.68$

Adding the two (\$24.00 + \$80.68) together, the total semi-annual water bill is \$104.68

Total semi-annual Sewer bill for New Britain properties is \$1.59 (per 100 cuft)  $\times 29 = 46.11$

And the total water and sewer bill is \$150.79



### 3. When is my water bill due?

The city is divided into 6 districts or cycles and each account in the district/cycle is billed twice a year – that is, every 6 months. If your 6 digit account number is between 100000 and 199999, you are billed every January and July; if your 6 digit account number is between 200000 and 299999, you are billed every February and August, etc.

When you receive your semi-annual water bill, the due date is shown in the upper left hand portion of the statement. The due date is always the first of the month; you have 30 days in which to pay your bill. Please note that we mail the bills out in advance of the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month; if you have not received your bill by the 3<sup>rd</sup> working day of the month your bill is due, please call us at (860) 826-3540. Per New Britain City Ordinances, "FAILURE TO RECEIVE THE BILL DOES NOT RELIEVE THE OWNER OF OVERDUE CHARGES."

An account is considered delinquent if payment is not received by the 30<sup>th</sup> day. After the 30<sup>th</sup> day [for example, on July 31<sup>st</sup>] a 10% penalty will be assessed, and interest charges of 1.5% on sewer and .5% on water (per month) will be calculated on the overdue amount and added to the balance. A delinquent notice is sent out to our customers if payment is not received by the due date; one will be sent out each month until the balance is paid off.

If you find yourself falling behind in payments, please call us at (860) 826-3540 to make payment arrangements.



#### 4. Why couldn't the Meter Reader read my meter?

During the course of daily routine the Company meter reader may have to leave a blue card on a customer's door if a meter reading could not be obtained from the exterior. The blue card requests the customer obtain a meter reading from the meter, which is inside the home, and call the reading into the New Britain office (826-3540).

Some problems that may occur that prevent us from getting a remote reading are:

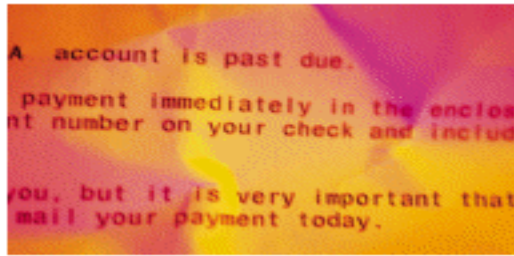
- The radio transmitter is not functioning properly and may need to be replaced.
- The meter and the radio transmitter or ARB box are not communicating correctly due to a broken wire, etc.

When we are unable to obtain a reading, New Britain Water's customer service staff uses the blue card to alert you to set up an appointment so a service technician can address and correct the problem.



#### 5. How do I read my meter?

Most water meters use straight-reading dials which are read the same way you read your car's odometer. New Britain Water Department meters measure water use in cubic feet (one cubic foot equals 7.481 gallons).



## 6. Why did I Receive a Delinquent Notice After I Paid My Bill?

When you receive your semi-annual water bill, there is a due date near the top of the bill; it is always the first of the month. You have 30 days in which to pay your bill. If your payment is not received in our office by 30 days after the due date, a second notice is sent out. For example, if your bill was due on Tuesday, July 1 and your payment was received on Thursday, July 31, your payment is late and a delinquent notice will be mailed. To avoid receiving a delinquent notice with interest and penalty due, New Britain Water must receive your payment within 30 days of the due date listed on the cycle bill. If your payment is being mailed, please make sure to allow sufficient time for delivery.



## 7. Why do you have to get into my house to change the meter?

Many customers think the meter is on the outside of their premise since that is where they most often see our employees. Actually, your meter must be located in a warm place for a very good reason - it would freeze in the winter if it were outside!

The box on the outside of the house is a remote reader. Our employees may insert a device in the remote reader to obtain your current reading. If you have a radio remote reader installed at your property our employee can determine your reading by a radio-based device.



## 8. How many gallons are in a cubic foot of water?

There are 7.481 gallons in 1 cubic foot of water. For example, 300 cubic feet of water equals 2,244 gallons of water ( $7.481 \times 300 = 2,244$ ).





## Ideas to help you save...

### It's Only a Small Drip...Right?

Slow drips of water can add up quickly. A toilet that "keeps running" after you flush or a sink that drips after it is turned off can waste thousands of gallons of water a year. If the drip is hot water, you are paying for wasted energy too. Fix leaks as soon as you find them. They won't go away on their own.

- Test toilets for leaks. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water in the tank, but don't flush. If coloring appears in the bowl within a few minutes, your toilet is leaking. If so, all it usually needs is a new toilet flapper, an easy and inexpensive repair job. San Antonio's hard water along with toilet cleaners, corrode soft rubber flappers, so they usually need to be replaced annually.
- Jiggle the handle. It might be the chain. You may need to adjust it.
- Adjust the "adjustment screw" on the float to stop water from going into the overflow tube.
- Check all waterline connections and faucets regularly.
- Do you know where your master shutoff valve is located? It'll save time and money if pipes burst.
- To check for underground leaks, turn off all indoor and outdoor faucets, then look at the meter. If the small dial is turning, you've got a leak.
- **Call a plumber immediately if the problem persists.**

### Use Your Water Meter to Detect Leaks

Leaks are a common cause of higher-than-expected water bills. Your water meter may be your most useful tool in identifying water leaks on your property.

#### To check for leaks

1. Locate your water meter. Water meters are usually located in your basement at the front or side of the house. If you are unable to check your water meter yourself, call us at (860) 826-3540 for assistance.
2. Locate the shut-off valve for your building. The shut-off valve is indoors; some buildings may have more than one shut-off valve. If you don't have a shut-off valve, we advise that you arrange for a plumber to install one.
3. Turn off all water faucets and appliances that use water. Check the position of the "1 cubic foot" dial on your water meter and record your reading.
4. After 30 minutes, record another meter reading.

#### Compare your readings

Your 2 readings should be the same because no water should have been used.

- If the dial has moved, you have a leak.

For approximately \$10 to \$20, the average homeowner can install two low-flow shower heads, place dams or bottles in the toilet tanks, install low-flow aerators on the faucets, and repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets. This could save 10,000 to more than 25,000 gallons per year for a family of four, and would pay for itself in less than a year! Even more could be saved if good outdoor water conservation is practiced for the lawn and garden.







# USE WATER WISELY



# IT AFFECTS EVERYONE!

## Leaks and Their Effects

Faucet leaks are easy to detect. If it drips or worse, continues to keep running after you shut it off, it needs to be fixed. If the dripping water is hot, it is costing you money to heat the water. Water is dripping from the shower head when the shower is shut off or running out of the spout when the shower is on is usually caused by bad washers or seats which need replacing. Fix leaking fixtures as soon as possible. A leaking faucet or toilet can dribble away thousands of gallons of water a year.

Size of Leak		Water Wasted
	1/32" drip	18,500 gal. every 3 months
	1/16" trickle	74,000 gal. every 3 months
	1/8" stream	296,000 gal. every 3 months
	1/4" stream	1,181,000 gal. every 3 months

Just because you don't see any water doesn't mean that there isn't a leak. Here are some tips for...



### I. In the Bathroom



### II. In the Kitchen



### III. Outside the House

## In the Bathroom



A toilet can fool you. Listen to it. Do you hear running water? Jiggle the handle. Check the flapper. Just don't let it run! Your toilet can be the biggest water waster in your home, wasting up to 1,440 gallons per day, or one gallon per minute. And that's one gallon too much.

Toilet leaks can range from small to large, constant or random. Many are even silent. Even a small, silent leak can easily waste \$50 per year in water and sewer costs. Large leaks can waste much more. Fortunately, most toilet leaks are relatively easy to fix. In a properly functioning toilet, no water should move from the tank to the bowl, unless the toilet is being flushed. A leaking toilet loses water from the tank to the bowl without being flushed. Check your toilets for leaks at least once a year. Slow, silent toilet leaks are very common. Water also goes down the drain when toilets are prone to occasional "running," "hanging up," "sticking," etc. Also be aware that the cleaning products you use – especially those you put in the back of the tank – may be corrosive and eat away at the "innards" making them wear away more quickly and leak.

### The benefits of replacing toilets

Old toilets are water hogs, using up to 5 gallons per flush compared to 1.6 gallons for toilets sold since 1994. Replacing old toilets with newer models in your home will save \$50 to \$125 and up to 10,500 gallons each year, depending on utility rates and usage habits.

**Save With Every Flush:** Did you know that toilets are the biggest water wasters in the home? Whether you have a very old toilet or a modern model, the new generation of 1.28 gallons per flush WaterSense toilets and the 1.6 gallons per flush FlushStar toilets will save you water and money.



Most households can easily save thousands of gallons of water and more than \$100 a year on utility bills by installing a WaterSense toilet, without sacrificing performance.

### Fixing Toilet Leaks

Unknown water use is most often the result of a leaking toilet. Sometimes toilet leaks aren't seen or heard. It is a good idea to check for a leaking toilet at least once a year.

1. Remove the TANK lid.
  2. Put 5-10 drops of food coloring in the TANK. Put lid back on but don't flush it yet.
  3. After about 10 minutes, look in the BOWL. If you see color, you have a leak.
- If you had water run into the bowl during the dye test and the water level is not set too high, there are 2 possible causes of a leak are either a "fill valve" that will not shut off or a bad "flapper".
- Fill valve problem** A fill valve problem will cause water to flow over the "overflow tube", either because the water level is set too high or it won't shut the water off. If you can't adjust the water level lower or can't get the fill valve to shut off, replace the fill valve. Pedestal fill valves are considered more reliable than the ball and float type.

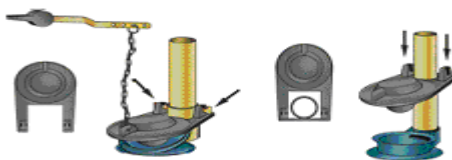
**Bad flapper** If you had water run into the bowl during the dye test and the water level is not set too high, your flapper is probably leaking and it should be replaced. If your old flapper has a float on the chain, make sure your new one does too (or put the old float on the new chain). When replacing a toilet flapper, remember that it is very important to replace it with the proper flapper model for your toilet. Using a standard flapper in many 1.6 gallon toilets can make the toilet flush up to 3.5 gallons per flush (except FlushStar models).

### Flapper Hint

Flappers should be changed at least once a year (along with your smoke alarm batteries). It is important to get the right flapper for your specific model of toilet. If you settle for a one-size-fits-all flapper, you're likely to use more water with each flush. For more information on what flapper you need, [click here](#).

### Replacing the Flapper

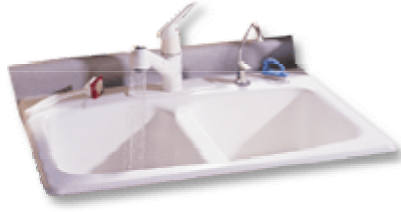
1. Shut off water supply to toilet.
2. Remove old flapper. Attach new flapper to the mounting arms.
3. Fasten chain onto lift arm with enclosed hook. There should be minimal slack in the closed position.
4. Turn on water supply.



**NOTE:** The top edge of the flush valve outlet should be smooth and free of pits and calcium deposits as this serves as the sealing surface.

## In the Kitchen

### Faucets and Sinks



**Leaking Faucets:** A dripping faucet can be an annoyance as well as a waste of water, AND a waste of energy if it is a hot tap; it can leave nasty stains on your bath or sink, as well. They are also easier to repair than you might think, often the result of a bad rubber washer. The washer on a sink is typically located under the handle. A washer is relatively easy to replace, if you have the right tools. It does require shutting off the water under the faucet, and removing the handle. Check local home centers or the Internet (keywords "repairing leaky faucets") for instructions on how to repair faucet leaks. If you don't feel comfortable doing the repair yourself, a plumber may be your best option. Remember, even if you have to pay a plumber to fix the leak, you will end up saving money in the long run

Taking these actions can also help save water in the kitchen:

- Turn the water off when washing dishes. If you have two sinks, try filling one with wash water and the other with rinse water. Otherwise, fill a separate basin with rinse water.
- Wash only full loads in your dishwasher. You'll save both water and energy.
- Don't pre-rinse dishes. Most newer dishwashers don't require pre-rinsing.
- Reuse clean household water, such as water you run until it's hot, or water used to boil eggs.

## Outside the House

Some tips to help you save:

- Use a broom and bucket of water for washing down the patio rather than a steady flow of water from the hose.
- Use mulch on the garden with help the soil retains water so will mean you won't have to water the garden as often.
- Don't overuse hoses or sprinklers in hot weather. A sprinkler can use as much water in an hour as a family of four will use in a day. Your lawn only really needs watering once a week and it is better to water in the morning when the temperature is lower and evaporation is less.
- Use a sponge and bucket of water to clean your car or if you use the hose, ensure you use a shut off nozzle so the water is not constantly running.
- Leaking Pipes - If you have a water leak along a pipe and do not have the knowledge to fix it, call a plumber.